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# Trying to Save Iran—The Wrong Way

In a scathing secret memo, State Department strategists have warned that President Carter's "chaotic" attempts to undermine the revolutionary government in Iran could play into Soviet hands.

The Soviets appear to be trying to destabilize and dismember Iran, the memo notes, by stirring up minority discord. As the country disintegrates into hostile ethnic factions, the Soviets seek to subvert and subjugate the separate factions, thereby bringing Iranian territory under Kremlin control on a piecemeal basis.

The secret memo accuses the White House, in effect, of advancing the Soviet strategy by our own clumsy, covert efforts to divide the minorities and disrupt the Iranian government. But unlike the Soviets, the memo charges, the clandestine U.S. operations lack central control and policy objectives.

As examples, the CIA has been broadcasting from Egypt appeals to Iranians to "take up arms" and has supported Iranian exile groups without controlling what these groups do. The CIA has also made, on-again, off-again, contacts with former military officers in Iran. This has succeeded only in having some of the unfortunate officers hauled before firing squads.

All the while these undercover operations have been going on, the State Department has kept its diplomatic hands off Iran and has adopted the wait-and-see attitude that Carter promised European allies last June he would maintain.

In frustration, the strategists have called the Carter policy "clinically schizophrenic — withdrawn, confused, and characterized by bizarre fantasy." This scathing language was addressed to the president's national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski.

The State Department experts were too discreet to discuss the president's motives in the memo. But privately, they suspect he wants to bring down Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's regime before the November election and take credit with the voters for the achievement, an inside source told me.

The experts fear that the Soviet Union, not the United States, would pick up the pieces. Because Iran dominates the Persian Gulf, fountainhead of the industrial world's oil, it is vital to U.S. interests to foster a stable, democratic government in Iran. This must "evolve from the current situation," without foreign interferences, urges the secret memo.

Footnote: The president's political whiz kid, Hamilton Jordan, wants to play politics with another aspect of the Iranian problem. A Justice Department task force has been investigating whether former attorney general Ramsey Clark's recent trip to Iran, in violation of the president's travel ban, can be prosecuted.

The confidential conclusion is that the Clark group "did not violate, except in a very narrow and technically questionable sense, any law or statute of the United States," that prosecution of the group would "almost inevitably result in dismissal" and that a government appeal would likely "produce undesirable precedent, which might limit the executive's options in future crises."

But Jordan has taken exception, in a private memo to the president. He noted that prosecution would be "politically popular" and that the trial would be "an extended process." The inference, in other words, is that the case would not likely be defeated or dismissed before the election. He argued that prosecution of the Clark group was "necessary to

maintaining the role of presidential leadership."